ECONOMY

ILLUSTRATED AND RECOMMENDED:

AND

A CAUTION

AGAINST

MODERN INFIDELITY:

IN

TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED AT THE

MEETING-HOUSE IN THE OLD JEWRY,

AND

PRINTED BY PARTICULAR REQUEST.

By ABRAHAM REES, D. D. F. R. S.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following diſcourſes were written without the moſt diſtant view to the preſs: and they are now printed in compliance with the urgent requeſt of many who heard them. The Author attributes this requeſt to the candor of their judgment and the partiality of their friendſhip. But it has been communicated in a manner that claims reſpectful attention and grateful acknowledgment. He has not the vanity to imagine, that he can derive from haſty compoſitions, adapted to particular occaſions, any acceſſion of reputation. Hoping, however, that they may not be altogether unuſeful, and that the candor which has been exerciſed by thoſe who heard them, will accompany the peruſal of them, he acquieſces in the wiſhes of his friends.

ECONOMY

ILLUSTRATED AND RECOMMENDED,

IN

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

MEETING-HOUSE IN THE OLD JEWRY,

On SUNDAY, February 23,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

HIGH PRICE AND APPREHENDED DEFICIENCY OF BREAD.

By ABRAHAM REES, D.D. F.R.S.

SERMON I.

JOHN vi. 12.

When they were filled, he ſaid unto his diſciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be loſt.

OUR LORD's miracles were, with few exceptions, acts of kindneſs and mercy, rather than of juſt ſeverity. They indicated the ſympathy and benevolence of his own diſpoſition, and they ſerved to illuſtrate and recommend the excellent ſpirit of that diſpenſation of grace and truth, which he was appointed to introduce and eſtabliſh. In their nature and deſign, as well as in the energy of divine power that accompanied them, they afforded a ſtriking evidence of his celeſtial origin and miſſion. This evidence they exhibited, not to a ſingle individual and on very rare occaſions, but to a great multitude of ſpectators and in many repeated inſtances. Theſe obſervations are eminently applicable to that miracle, which the hiſtory of the text records. It was performed in the preſence of a great company, who were aſſembled by his increaſing fame, and

who continued with him for a long time, in order to enjoy the benefit of his inſtructions. This company conſiſted of perſons of various deſcriptions, whom curioſity had brought together, and who could have no predilection in his favour or attachment to his perſon, which were not the reſult of their own obſervation and conviction. It is vain to alledge, that they were deceived or diſpoſed to be deluded; for they were not of the number of his diſciples, who were actually enliſted in his ſervice, and who were admitted to familiar intercourſe with him.

Should it be ſaid, that they followed him from motives of intereſt, we allow the fact; and deduce from it an argument in proof of the reality of thoſe ſignal miracles, which his hiſtory aſcribes to him. He had no means of relieving and ſupplying them, beſides thoſe which teſtified to the extraordinary powers with which he was endowed. The exerciſe of theſe powers they had witneſſed; and they had participated the benefits, which they enabled him to impart. The number of thoſe who were aſſembled on the occaſion, to which the text refers, was five thouſand. They were arranged in ſuch a manner, previouſly to the repaſt of which they were about to partake, that would eaſily admit of their being counted; and the viſible means of their ſupply were five barley loaves and two ſmall fiſhes. *What are theſe*, might the diſciples well ſay, *among ſo many?* Their heſitation concerning the ſufficiency of this ſcanty proviſion for aſſuaging the hunger of ſuch a multitude, that had been long deſtitute of food, muſt be a notorious fact; and thoſe who were ordered to prepare for partaking of it, muſt comply with no ſmall degree of anxiety and uncertainty as to the event. Our bleſſed Lord, however, conſcious

ſcious of his own powers, undertook what indeed to obſervers muſt have appeared an impracticable buſineſs, to diſpenſe out of this ſmall ſtock to every individual an ample ſupply.

Having given thanks to God, for that ſlender pittance, which common gratitude might have overlooked, or not have thought worthy of acknowledgment; and having thus ſuggeſted a leſſon of thankfulneſs for the moſt inconſiderable bleſſings; *he diſtributed to the diſciples, and the diſciples to them that were ſeated;* and when all were ſatisfied, the fragments that remained filled twelve baſkets. Well might the men who ſaw the miracle which Jeſus performed, and who had ſenſible experience of its reality, infer from it, *This is of a truth that prophet that ſhould come into the world.* Our Lord's powers, however, were exerted for the ſupply of real indigence, and not for the purpoſes either of oſtentation or profuſion. He, who was able to ſatisfy the hunger of five thouſand perſons by means of five loaves and two ſmall fiſhes, and who poſſeſſed within himſelf reſources for any neceſſity that might afterwards occur, commanded the diſciples to *gather up the fragments that remained, ſo that nothing might be loſt.* Excellent and admirable leſſon of prudence and economy! A leſſon, which, delivered by ſuch a teacher, and upon ſuch a memorable occaſion, cannot be unworthy of univerſal regard, nor unſuitable to the important ends of religious inſtruction.

To thoſe, whoſe reſources are few and precarious, it has an aptitude, which their peculiar circumſtances will not ſuffer them to treat with neglect and contempt: nor can the moſt affluent think it beneath their notice, when they conſider, that it was enjoined by one much richer than themſelves;

ſelves; by him, who had the power of changing the courſe of nature at his command; who could do what no worldly wealth nor human ability can effect; and whoſe reſources, for all neceſſary and uſeful purpoſes, were independent and all-ſufficient. And yet this poſſeſſor of inherent and unalienable affluence, after a diſplay of power which might well aſtoniſh whilſt it relieved the ſurrounding multitude, prohibits waſte, and inculcates a leſſon of economy, *Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be loſt.*

Let us inquire to what particular caſes this prudential maxim may be applied, and how it may be rendered inſtructive, as a directory of conduct and of happineſs.

The *firſt* and moſt obvious caſe to which this maxim may be applied, is that of the uſe of the ordinary means of our ſubſiſtence. The real wants of nature are much more eaſily ſupplied than thoſe that are created by the capriciouſneſs of fancy or the extravagance of faſhionable folly. But in the ſupply of theſe wants, particular circumſtances require the exerciſe of correſponding prudence and frugality. Againſt every kind of exceſs and intemperance it is needleſs to enter a ſolemn proteſt. Theſe are, on all occaſions, and in every ſituation of life, reproachful and culpable. Theſe are an abuſe of the bounties of Providence, which is as pernicious as it is diſreputable; and which common prudence, as well as religious duty, abſolutely prohibit. Theſe are, in no caſe, allowable and lawful; but they are peculiarly criminal and injurious, when they are the means of depriving others, in a more deſtitute condition, of neceſſary ſupply, or of increaſing the difficulty of their obtaining it. But without recurring to thoſe exceſſes, which ought always

always to be avoided and condemned, much may be done, wherever a ſyſtem of ſtrict economy is adopted, for preventing that waſte and profuſion which are in ſome reſpects no leſs detrimental to ſociety and to individuals than intemperance.

This kind of prudent frugality does not at all interfere with the various modes of living, that are adapted to the different ranks of life. It does not encroach on the duties or the pleaſures of hoſpitality; much leſs does it reſtrain the kind offices either of friendſhip or of charity. What would be deemed profuſion in the lower ranks of ſociety might be juſtly reckoned parſimony amongſt the more elevated and affluent. On the other hand, what might be truly denominated penurioufneſs in them would be extravagance in the former. It is needleſs to obſerve, that rank and wealth require and juſtify a perſonal appearance and domeſtic indulgences, which would be unbecoming and culpable in perſons, whoſe ſtation is more humble, whoſe condition is more dependent, and whoſe ſources of ſupply are more limited and precarious. It cannot, however, eſcape notice, that the gradations of ſociety are ſubverted and confounded by the abſurd and unwarrantable ambition, which is diſcovered in the lower ranks of life, of reſembling thoſe who are deſtined to occupy ſuperior ſtations. This kind of competition for luxury and oſtentation originates in pride and envy; and in its conſequences it is diſgraceful and detrimental.

But there are certain ſeaſons, in which perſons of every condition ſhould concur in manifeſting a rigid attention to the maxim of the text. Such a ſeaſon in the courſe of divine Providence now occurs: nor do we think it unſuitable to our ſituation and office to inculcate and enforce it. To

general

general ſcarcity ſacrifices ſhould be made in every ſphere of life: and the rich ſhould reſtrict and diminiſh thoſe gratifications, which on other occaſions would be allowable, and on which they have a juſt claim, when by ſo doing they may be inſtrumental in relieving the more deſtitute and indigent. This is one mode of exerciſing benevolence and charity, which the circumſtances of the times imperiouſly demand; and which no true friend of his ſpecies or of his country will heſitate in adopting to its utmoſt extent. This is a period, which enforces, by motives of benevolence and by conſiderations of perſonal intereſt, the leſſon of the text, *Gather up the fragments that remain.* Attend to thoſe reſtraints and arrangements of domeſtic economy, in the more minute and inconſiderable inſtances which might, at any other time, be overlooked without danger; that, by leſſening conſumption, the means of ſupply may be extended and augmented. By ſubmitting to temporary reſtraint and inconvenience; by ſelf-denial and abſtinence with regard to cuſtomary indulgences; and by adopting a general ſyſtem of frugality, enforced by the example of ſuperiors on the obſervance of thoſe that are ſubordinate and dependent, an apprehended evil may be avoided; and every individual will have the ſatisfaction of contributing to the relief and ſupply of the public community. Perſons of a reflecting and devout ſpirit will enjoy the higher ſatisfaction of accommodating their views and temper and conduct to the diſpenſations of divine Providence, and of doing what lies in their power to quiet and appeaſe the alarmed and anxious, and to preſerve the internal peace and ſecurity of their country. By the practice of that kind of economy which is now recommended, and which

the

the ſtate of the nation requires, the pleaſures of hoſpitality and ſocial intercourſe will be continued, and charity will poſſeſs the means of extending relief to the indigent and diſtreſſed. Thoſe who are prudent and frugal, as far as their own gratification is concerned, will thus acquire the ability to indulge benevolent inclinations; and a temporary experience of ſome of the diſadvantages incident to a more deſtitute condition will increaſe their ſympathy and prompt them to acts of compaſſion and liberality. It is not from thoſe who expend their ſuperfluous wealth in oſtentatious diſplays of magnificence and luxury, and who vie with one another in the decoration of their houſes, the number of their retinue, the ſplendour of their equipage, the profuſion of their repaſts, the multitude of their gueſts, the variety of their amuſements, and the brilliancy of their perſonal ornaments, that much may be expected for the ſupply of indigence and the alleviation of diſtreſs. Other objects claim their attention, and exhauſt their reſources; and they are frugal only in their charity. But the moſt liberal are found amongſt perſons of a very different deſcription; who practiſe economy that they may poſſeſs the ability of being beneficent and uſeful, and who apply the produce of their frugality to the purpoſes of kindneſs and humanity. Thus do they reſemble the example of the moſt illuſtrious Philanthropiſt, that ever dwelt amongſt men; who, whilſt he inculcated the maxim of prudence, *gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be loſt, went about doing good*:—adminiſtering to the neceſſities and the comforts of mankind. I obſerve,

Secondly; This maxim is applicable, in a more general view of it, to the conduct of our ſecular concerns.

It would betray a total ignorance of the world to pretend, that ſignal ſucceſs has not ſometimes attended bold adventures; and that great wealth has not been amaſſed by raſh and hazardous ſpeculations, the event of which has been doubtful, and the poſſible termination of which has made even thoſe who have engaged in them, occaſionally tremble. But in projects of this kind, the prudent and wary have been cautious of embarking. The more honourable and the more certain means of proſperity, have been patient induſtry, perſevering activity, and laudable frugality. It is by an attention to trivial circumſtances, which the ambitious and adventurous, who are ever directing their views and purſuits to great objects, overlook and deſpiſe, that the maſs of mankind acquire a decent ſubſiſtence, or a reputable independence. A wiſe economy reſtrains them from indulging in expectations of ſudden aggrandiſement, directs and regulates all their plans and meaſures in the gradual progreſs of their advancement, and contributes more certainly and more effectually to their ſucceſs, than any preſumptuous adventure, which may iſſue in diſgrace and ruin.

As they have no occaſion for large ſupplies to maintain that moderate ſyſtem of perſonal expenditure and domeſtic arrangement, which their prudence has adopted, they are under no temptation to engage in hazardous undertakings. They are content with the ſlow, but more ſure ſucceſſion of ordinary events. If they do not attain opulence ſo rapidly and ſo conſpicuouſly as others, they avoid anxiety and eſcape danger. If, in the viciſſitudes of the world, perſons of this character ſhould be diſappointed in their reaſonable expectations, they will encounter difficulties without ſelf-

reproach,

reproach, and be entitled in diſtreſs to ſympathy and ſuccour.

The ſucceſs of the more adventurous may poſſibly attract a greater degree of notice and admiration; but their fall, ſhould they miſcarry, will be leſs deplored by others, and felt by themſelves, unleſs their ſenſibility is become callous, with peculiar circumſtances of aggravation. Economy, however, will be in the uſual courſe of the world, a preſervative againſt misfortune. It will be the ſhield of our integrity and honour. It will be the ſpring of peace and comfort, whatever event may befal us. In every ſituation of life it will ſecure our independence. If our reſources ſhould be few and precarious, it will adapt our temper to our condition, and enable us to exerciſe acquieſcence and contentment. If they ſhould be more liberal and permanent, it will augment and perpetuate them. —It will raiſe us above temptation. It will enable us to reſiſt every inducement to ſtoop to what is mean, and to commit what is criminal. Whilſt it provides and preſerves the means of ſupply, adequate to our wants and wiſhes, and converts what ſome would deem penury, into plenty; it is a fund of wealth of which the world cannot bereave us, and a ſource of enjoyment which the ambitious and enterprizing are ſearching for in vain in honours and treaſures, which capricious favour beſtows or withdraws, equally without reaſon. From a defect of this kind of economy, alike remote from avarice on the one hand, and from profuſion on the other, has ſprung that poverty which creates dependence, and that dependence which increaſes corruption. Neceſſity firſt betrays thoſe who have neglected it into mean compliances; and

and as an excellent writer,* obſerves, next impels them to open crimes; and beginning with oſtentation and extravagance, they end in infamy and guilt. To what cauſe ſo much as to the want of economy, can we attribute thoſe ſcenes of diſtreſs, which ſo frequently excite our pity; families that once were flouriſhing, reduced to ruin; and the melancholy widow, and neglected orphan, thrown forth friendleſs upon the world? What cauſe has been more fruitful in engendering thoſe atrocious crimes which fill ſociety with diſguſt and terror, in training the gameſter to fraud, the robber to violence, and even the aſſaſſin to blood? Prudence and frugality on the other hand, enſure ſelf-approbation and tranquillity of mind, and afford the means not only of perſonal enjoyment, but of contributing to domeſtic and ſocial happineſs, of ſupplying the neceſſitous, and relieving the diſtreſſed; of gaining the bleſſing of the poor, and of cauſing the widow's heart to ſing for joy. For purpoſes of this excellent and laudable kind, *Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing may be loſt.*

Farther,

Thirdly, The maxim of the text may be extended to the proper improvement of our time; the leſſer portions or fragments of which, are liable to be loſt without vigilant attention. I am very ſenſible that, in this mode of applying it, we ſhall deviate from the letter, though not from the true ſpirit, of the leſſon of inſtruction which it affords us. In the conduct of the divine teacher, who enjoins it on our obſervance, we have an example of wiſdom and diligence in this reſpect, which claims our grateful notice, and our ſedulous imitation; and if

* Blair.

if we are duly impreſſed by a conviction of the value of time, and of the uncertainty of its duration, we ſhall not want motives to ſolicitude and zeal in improving it. Conſider it in its reference to our daily occupations and purſuits, and every moment of it demands appropriation to ſome important and uſeful purpoſe, either of ſerious buſineſs, or of neceſſary relaxation. But neither buſineſs nor amuſement ſhould encroach on thoſe ſeaſons, that ought to be employed in the diſcharge of moral and religious duties; in cultivating the underſtanding and meliorating the heart. Our time ſhould not be ſo wholly engroſſed by lawful objects and laudable purſuits, as to leave no vacant moments for the exerciſes of meditation and devotion, for an attendance on religious inſtitutions, and for duly regarding the concerns of the ſoul and eternity. Nor ſhould we be deluded into a neglect of the ſuperior intereſts of our being, as rational, accountable, and immortal creatures, and be induced to delay and poſtpone them, under a notion, that our paſſing moments will be renewed, and that opportunities will recur, which we may devote to this neceſſary purpoſe. If, indeed, we are frugal and diligent in the uſe of the time allotted us, it will be found ſufficient for every demand both of life and duty, for ſecular buſineſs, for religious improvement, and for indiſpenſible recreation. But we ſhould recollect that every thing is beautiful in its ſeaſon, and that one kind of employment ſhould not occupy our attention and time, ſo as either in degree or duration to interfere with another. Let the hours of our amuſement be ſubſervient to thoſe of labour, either of body or of mind; and amidſt all our occupations, let us not forget that God demands a portion of our time,

and that there is no ſacrilege ſo culpable and ſo pernicious, as that which deprives the Author and Preſerver of life of thoſe moments, which he has appropriated to himſelf, and which he has conſecrated to our preparation for judgment and eternity. Religion intrudes on no neceſſary and lawful buſineſs. It allows us full ſcope for every innocent and honourable purſuit. Let not buſineſs or pleaſure then encroach on the province of religion, and on thoſe ſacred ſeaſons which are deſtined to our improvement in knowledge and virtue, and to our attainment of a happy immortality. By a prudent uſe of every period of our time, let us manifeſt a becoming ſenſe of its fleeting and uncertain duration. By *gathering up the fragments* of it, or employing wiſely and well thoſe intervals of it that are paſſing off in quick and rapid ſucceſſion, and which are too often waſted or abuſed—waſted by ſloth, or abuſed by licentiouſneſs—let us be meet for that ſolemn ſeaſon, when it ſhall be pronounced concerning us, that *time ſhall be no longer*. The ſeaſon is haſtening on with ſpeed. By thoſe ſucceſſive moments, the lapſe of which is too generally diſregarded, does the arrival of it advance. Let us therefore arreſt them in their flight, and devote them to important and uſeful purpoſes; and we need not regret the rapidity of their courſe, nor dread their termination.

I obſerve once more,

Fourthly, The maxim of the text may be profitably applied to the regulation of our conduct and the increaſe of our happineſs. The ſecurity and progreſs of our virtue, and the reputation of our character, depend on minute circumſtances, which the careleſs overlook, and which the preſumptuous and ſelf-confident deſpiſe. By ſlight and hardly perceptible

perceptible errors and omiſſions of acknowledged duty; by inconſiderable failings and tranſgreſſions, that almoſt eſcape our own animadverſion and that of others; by the renewal and repetition of theſe, the heart is corrupted, the ſenſibility of conſcience deadened, habits are formed, and the character is eſtabliſhed. Guard, therefore, againſt the firſt deviation from probity and virtue; from the path of rectitude and honour. Shun the firſt temptation that beſets you. Acquire a habit of reſiſtance at the firſt aſſaults. Suffer not allowed neglect or violation of duties, apparently of inferior moment, to pave the way for more culpable omiſſions, and for more flagrant crimes.

Without this kind of attention, the natural progreſs will be from bad to worſe; from that which is culpable in a ſlight degree, to that which is more inexcuſable; till the integrity and peace of the mind are loſt, and univerſal degeneracy of diſpoſition and practice enſues. In like manner, it is by unſlumbering vigilance, by cheriſhing a ſenſibility, "tremblingly alive," by maintaining a ſteady and fixed purpoſe of heart, and by a conſtant uſe of appointed means of ſecurity and improvement, that the virtuous character is acquired, preſerved and rendered permanent.

It may be ſaid perhaps:---It has been actually aſſerted, both in converſation and writing, that public inſtruction and religious inſtitutions, conducted with many failings and imperfections, produce little effect. Whilſt we lament their inefficacy in various inſtances, we ſtill maintain, that mankind would be much worſe without them, and that they anſwer, in one degree or other, ſeveral ſalutary purpoſes. If this be the caſe, they deſerve, on the principles which we are now ſtating, ſupport and

encouragement. They furniſh, to convert the literal language of the text into a metaphor, fragments of ſpiritual bread, or nutritive food to the mind, and means of ſubſiſtence and growth to the religious and moral character, which ſhould not be loſt. The principles and practice of religious virtue are encouraged and promoted, not by any inſtantaneous and ſignal operation, but by renewed impreſſions; by frequently directing the attention to the ſame ſubjects; and by making the truths and motives of religion familiar to the mind. Thus, good diſpoſitions are excited: correſponding reſolutions confirmed: and the virtuous character eſtabliſhed and improved.

Our happineſs, no leſs than the ſecurity and improvement of our character, depends on circumſtances comparatively minute and inconſiderable, more than on thoſe that are of greater importance. As the foundations of our religious virtue are more likely to be ſapped and undermined by ſlight attacks of temptation, that are repeated, than by the ſingle aſſault of any foreſeen trial, however formidable, againſt which we are armed and guarded; our happineſs likewiſe is more in danger of being interrupted by ſlight accidents and trivial events than by any more ſevere affliction. The mind adapts itſelf to a ſituation of ſignal diſtreſs. Such a ſituation calls forth into exerciſe the full energy of its fortitude and patience. We have ſeen, in fact, that by its natural powers, and by the concurring aſſiſtance of the Almighty, trials of a very grievous kind have been endured with magnanimity and reſignation. Before tribunals of judgment, and amidſt the horrors of perſecution; in the priſon, and in the flames; the enthuſiaſm of piety and virtue has triumphed over the moſt appalling

terrors,

terrors, and the moſt ſevere ſufferings. Thoſe, who have been exerciſed with very great affliction, have had inward ſources of ſupport and enjoyment, that have counterbalanced their outward diſtreſs. It is by trivial occurrences, that the tranquility of the mind is moſt apt to be diſcompoſed. They attack us by ſurprize; or, if foreſeen, they are diſregarded. They attack us, when we are unprepared for encountering them; and they are frequently the cauſes of fretfulneſs, diſcontent, and impatience. To the ſame purpoſe we might obſerve, that our happineſs is continued and augmented more by little incidents than by great events. The effect of the latter is momentary and tranſient; that of the former, regular and permanent. Though the courſe of our lives ſhould not be marked by any very ſignal occurrences, either of an adverſe or proſperous nature, let us not imagine, that we are exempt from trial; or that we are left deſtitute of the means of enjoyment. Whilſt we guard againſt being diſcompoſed, and rendered unhappy by trivial events; let us be thankful for thoſe leſſer bleſſings, which, by being duly regarded, may yield us a great amount of true felicity. With a right frame of mind; with a quickneſs to diſcern, and a diſpoſition to acknowledge, and to enjoy our bleſſings, we may derive much happineſs from them, however inconſiderable they may be in themſelves, and however apt we may be to overlook them. By a mind leſs devout and grateful than that of our divine Saviour, five loaves and two ſmall fiſhes would have been conſidered as ſcarce deſerving acknowledgment, when they were the whole ſtock, out of which the wants of five thouſand perſons were to be ſupplied. He, however, commences his miraculous and liberal diſtribution with an act

of thankſgiving to God. Gratitude and beneficence concur. The thankful receiver, and the generous donor, commonly unite in the ſame character. A diſpoſition chearfully to enjoy, and freely to communicate the bounties of Providence uſually accompanies a grateful ſenſe, and devout acknowledgment of them. Whereas, thoſe are generally moſt parſimonious in the uſe and moſt reluctant in the diſtribution of their bleſſings, who are leaſt ſenſible of their obligations to the giver, and leaſt inclined to render to him a tribute of praiſe. From the example exhibited in the hiſtory before us, let us learn to perceive the goodneſs of Providence in the minuteſt of our bleſſings. Let us receive them with a thankful heart. Let us participate them with an expreſſion of our gratitude. Let us chearfully impart to the neceſſities of the indigent. Let us thus deduce from them the good, which they are deſigned to adminiſter.

Have our wants been regularly ſupplied? Have our means of enjoyment ſuffered little interruption? Have we ſeldom been alarmed with the proſpect of their diminution or failure? Let gratitude reſtrain murmur and diſcontent. Let us gladly concur in every effort, though it may require temporary abſtinence and ſelf-denial, for rendering the evil that now alarms us as partial in its extent, as tolerable in its degree, and as limited in its duration, as the circumſtances of our country will allow.

Whilſt other nations and other ages have had the diſtreſſing experience of plague and famine, and the devouring ſword; we have not been witneſſes of the devaſtations occaſioned by theſe awful calamities.

From ourſelves and our country, let us contribute every effort in our power for averting them; and whilſt we ſet an example of forbearance and of

hope,

hope, in the proſpect of renewed Peace and Plenty to other nations and to our own, let us commend ourſelves and our country, by unfeigned devotion, and perſonal virtue, to the protection and favour of that Providence, which has been our refuge in former ſeaſons of diſtreſs, and which, we truſt, will again reſcue and proſper us. Amen.

SERMON II.

A CAUTION against MODERN INFIDELITY,

IN

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

MEETING-HOUSE IN THE OLD JEWRY,

On WEDNESDAY the 12th of March,

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR

A NATIONAL FAST.

By ABRAHAM REES, D. D. F. R. S.

SERMON II.

MALACHI iii. 16, 17.

16. *Then they that feared the* LORD *ſpake often one to another, and the* LORD *hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the* LORD, *and that thought upon his name.*

17. *And they ſhall be mine, ſaith the* LORD *of hoſts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will ſpare them as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him.*

MALACHI was the laſt of the Old Teſtament prophets. He lived about 428 years before the birth of Chriſt; and delivered his predictions within a century after the reſtoration of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, their ſettlement in their own land, and the rebuilding of their temple at Jeruſalem. For theſe events they were indebted, under Providence, to the decree of Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, which was announced in the

the year before Chriſt 536, and of which they had availed themſelves for a conſiderable time before the period, when Malachi executed his prophetic commiſſion, or about the year before Chriſt 429. This prophet was well acquainted with the hiſtory of the Jewiſh people. He knew that the ſalutary impreſſions of former diſtreſſes which they had ſuffered, had been of ſhort duration; and he dreaded the pernicious effects of their renewed proſperity. His fears were not groundleſs and imaginary. In leſs than a century after their reſcue from Babylon, and eſtabliſhment in their native land, they became unmindful of their affliction and of their deliverance; and, though they never afterwards degenerated into the idolatry of their anceſtors, they were corrupt and profligate, and needed both reproof and warning. They had, it is true, their temple and their ſynagogues; and theſe were undoubtedly of great importance and uſe. But they were too generally neglected and deſerted; and hence proceeded degeneracy of principle and licentiouſneſs of conduct.

Such were the character and ſtate of the Jews at the time when Malachi uttered his predictions. He, therefore, intermixes with his prophecies of future events, cenſures and admonitions, that were applicable to the conduct and to the circumſtances of his countrymen at the period in which he lived. But though the character of many of them was reprehenſible, and in its aſpect on their civil ſecurity and proſperity juſtly alarming; there were amongſt them perſons of a very different deſcription. The words of the text delineate their principles and practice; and they alſo inform us, what meaſures they adopted in a ſeaſon of apprehenſion and danger, and what benefits reſulted from the courſe

of

of conduct which they purſued. In the proſecution of this diſcourſe I ſhall apply theſe words to the purpoſes of our preſent aſſembling, and illuſtrate the important and uſeful inſtruction which they afford us. We may obſerve,

1ſt. That there are ſome traces of reſemblance between our own country and that of Judæa at the period to which the prophet refers, that are not unworthy of our notice.

Britain, like Paleſtine, has been diſtinguiſhed for a ſucceſſion of years by a variety of privileges and bleſſings. In many reſpects, however, our country has enjoyed an unqueſtionable pre-eminence. With regard to the means of religious knowledge, our advantages, in conſequence of the early introduction and continued ſubſiſtence of Chriſtianity amongſt us, have been far ſuperior to thoſe of the Jews; and they have been progreſſively extended and improved to a degree, unknown in Judæa, by the reformation from popery, and by the ſubſequent removal of various reſtraints, to which freedom of inquiry has been ſubject in Catholic countries.

Our privileges, civil and religious, have been liable to fewer interruptions from foreign invaſion and aſſault than thoſe of the Jewiſh nation, which, deſtitute of the barrier that ſecures the Britiſh iſles, was expoſed to the ravages of hoſtile powers, againſt which they had no natural defence. We have had no experience of thoſe dreadful devaſtations that are occaſioned by invading armies; nor have the inhabitants of our country groaned under the diſtreſs of captivity and removal to diſtant regions, ſimilar to that, which was repeatedly endured by the Jewiſh people. Nevertheleſs, we have too much reſembled the Jews in our inattention to the bleſſings we have enjoyed; and we have

have been, like them, too prone to yield to the corrupting influence of ſecurity and proſperity. Of the recent deliverance to which Malachi refers they were unmindful; and eſtabliſhed in the poſſeſſion of their native land, they forgot the 70 years' captivity from which they had been reſcued, and neglected the uſe of thoſe religious inſtitutions and the practice of thoſe duties, which their reſtoration to their own country afforded them the opportunity and the means of obſerving.

In the uninterrupted enjoyment of our privileges, have we not reaſon to lament, that they are too generally diſregarded and undervalued? Is there not ground for complaint, that the houſe of God is forſaken; that the ordinances of religion are neglected; and that ſome have even proceeded to the extreme of diſputing and depreciating their utility? We have amongſt us perſons, who, like thoſe whom the prophet deſcribes, avow their opinion, that *it is vain* thus *to ſerve* GOD; and that no profit accrues from the obſervance of his ſacred inſtitutions. This pernicious opinion is gaining ground. It is induſtriouſly propagated. It is eagerly imbibed. It is producing viſible effects on the practice of mankind. I wiſh that the hurtful influence of it were confined to the open advocates of infidelity. Sentiments of this kind are diſſeminated amongſt the young. They are adopted by the deſcendants of thoſe, who have themſelves made public profeſſion of religion and inculcated it upon their poſterity: and we regret, that they abſent themſelves from the aſſemblies of ſocial worſhippers.

Have we not likewiſe opportunity of obſerving, and reaſon for lamenting the progreſs of a ſceptical ſpirit on the ſubject of religion? Do we not meet with many in the common intercourſe of life, who

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are fond of diſputing the truth of principles, which we have been accuſtomed to think obvious and important; and who, with avidity, embrace any ſyſtem of opinions, that ſets them at the greateſt poſſible diſtance from thoſe that are deemed and denominated the vulgar tribe of believers? Is not actual infidelity avowed without diſguiſe? Is it not encouraged and promoted by converſation and writing? Does it not become almoſt faſhionable to adopt licentious principles, and to pretend, that they are founded on a philoſophy more comprehenſive, more liberal, more juſt, and more laudable, than that which connects itſelf with religion, and which ſerves to uphold and preſerve it? We are ſorry to add, that the infidelity of the preſent day is very different from that of former times. It does not content itſelf with renouncing the principles and profeſſion of Chriſtianity; but proceeds to the extreme of queſtioning the exiſtence of God, and the adminiſtration of a natural and moral Providence. The diſciples of the modern ſchool, ſitting at the feet of Hume and Voltaire, and improving upon the leſſons received from theſe maſters, deify nature, without underſtanding or illuſtrating the meaning of the term. They exclude from their creed the belief of an intelligent, over-ruling, and righteous Sovereign, who concerns himſelf with mankind, the idea of accountableneſs and the expectation of future retribution. Not ſatisfied with bereaving the world of the conſolations and hopes of the goſpel, they undermine the fundamental principles of natural religion. They aim their impious attempts at the throne of God. They deny the counſel and agency of his Providence; and repreſent the grave as the laſt refuge and hopeleſs aſylum of man.

Principles of this kind have a natural tendency

to produce licentiouſneſs of practice. They remove ſalutary reſtraints from the paſſions of mankind. They give a pernicious influence to the temptations of the world. They diveſt Vice of its horrors, and Virtue of its protection in a ſeaſon of danger. They hold out no encouragement to reſolution and activity in a good cauſe. They preſent no motives to excite emulation, to induce great exertions, and to lead men to aſpire after diſtinguiſhed excellence and eminence of character.

Among thoſe who poſſeſs no principles of religion; who are not actuated by a regard to a righteous Providence, a future judgment, and an eternal world:—Among thoſe who can perſuade themſelves to think, that God does not notice the conduct of his creatures, that he is unmindful of their intereſts, and that he has made no proviſion for the happineſs of the good, or the puniſhment of the wicked:—We cannot expect to find any characters diſtinguiſhed by ſelf-denial, by active exertions, by exemplary patience, and by invincible perſeverance in the cauſe of Truth, Integrity, and Virtue. They want the incentives to a laudable ambition; they want the checks to a culpable conduct, which religious principles afford.

The views of worldly policy, and preſent intereſt, are contracted and variable: at beſt they are limited in their influence, and they are ſubject to the viciſſitudes of outward events. They do not elevate our thoughts above this changing world; they do not extend our purſuits beyond its narrow boundaries; they do not furniſh powerful and permanent principles of active, or patient Virtue, like thoſe that are derived from a regard to an obſerving Deity, truſt in a moral Providence, and Faith in a period of account, and a ſtate of retribution.

What has been the viſible effect of unſettled and licentious principles with reſpect to the great doctrines of religion? What has been the practical conſequence of the denial of an infinite Intelligence, a preſiding Providence, and a future World? Have we known, that perſons, who boaſt of having thrown off the ſhackles of Chriſtian faith and proſpects, and who pay no reſpect to the inſtitutions of the Goſpel, and to the outward forms of religion:---- Have we known, that ſuch perſons have eſcaped without injury under the preſſure of any ſevere trial? Are we able to recount any ſacrifices they have made, and ſufferings they have endured, in a courſe of inflexible integrity? Have we obſerved, that they have acquired any eminence, and that they have exhibited any luſtre of character? Have we not known, that they have accommodated their conduct to views of ſecular ambition and intereſt; that they have been the mere creatures of external circumſtances; and that many of them have been as profligate in their practice as they have been licentious in their creed?

The ſtate of modern Europe exhibits many lamentable inſtances, that will enable us to anſwer theſe inquiries. If our own obſervation, if our own country do not furniſh ſuch inſtances; we need not extend our views to any very remote diſtance. A neighbouring nation, which has for ſeveral years been a ſcene of blood, has been alſo a theatre of the moſt daring infidelity, and of the moſt atrocious iniquity.

With the politics of that country, or of our own, it is not my province to interfere in this place. But againſt that pernicious philoſophy, that ſaps the foundations not only of Chriſtianity, but of religion in general; that robs men of the conſolations and

hopes, connected with faith in God and in futurity; that enfeebles the reſtraints of vice, and annuls the obligations of perſonal and ſocial virtue; we ſhall think it our duty in the moſt undiſguiſed and public manner to proteſt; and to warn our country, and the riſing generation in particular, againſt its contagious and deſtructive influence. Againſt teachers and writers, who expreſsly aſſert, that the univerſal cauſe, the God of the Philoſophers, of the Jews, and of the Chriſtians, is but a chimæra and a phantom; that the phœnomena of nature only prove the exiſtence of God to a few prepoſſeſſed men, and ſo far from beſpeaking a God, they are merely the neceſſary effects of matter prodigiouſly diverſified; that we cannot know, whether a God really exiſts, or whether there be the ſmalleſt difference between good and evil, or vice and virtue; that the immortality of the ſoul, ſo far from ſtimulating man to the practice of virtue, is nothing but a barbarous, deſperate, fatal tenet, contrary to all legiſlation; that all ideas of juſtice and injuſtice, of virtue and vice, of glory and infamy, are purely arbitrary and dependent on cuſtom; that conſcience and remorſe are nothing more than the foreſight of thoſe phyſical penalties to which crimes expoſe us; and that the fear of God, ſo far from being the beginning of wiſdom, is the commencement of folly:--- But I forbear to ſhock your feelings, and to ſtagger even your belief, by multiplying extracts of this kind:---Againſt teachers and writers, who advance ſuch opinions as theſe, and who induſtriouſly inculcate them amongſt all claſſes of mankind, not excepting thoſe who are in the loweſt ſtation; we ſhall ever interpoſe our moſt earneſt caution and warning. We add, without heſitation and ſcruple, that their prevalence is more formidable, and more miſchievous

chievous than any calamities of war, or famine, or peſtilence, that can annoy and afflict the world.

When infidelity aſſumes this high tone of inſolence and impiety, and when its leſſons are addreſſed to the vulgar, and adapted to the meaneſt capacity :---" When," as Archdeacon Paley, one of the moſt diſtinguiſhed and approved of our modern writers on the ſubject of religion, has remarked,* " infidelity is ſerved up in every ſhape, that is likely to allure, ſurprize, or beguile the imagination; in a fable, a tale, a novel, a poem; interſperſed and broken hints ; remote and oblique ſurmiſes; in books of travels, of philoſophy, of natural hiſtory; in a word, in any form, rather than the right one, that of a profeſſed and regular diſquiſition:"—When this is the caſe, it behoves the advocates of religion, and of the beſt intereſts of man, as an individual, or as a member of ſociety, domeſtic or civil, to be upon their guard, and to exert every power of reaſoning and remonſtrance in checking its baneful progreſs.

There are, however, perſons, to whom the text directs our views, from whoſe united, zealous, and perſevering efforts, much may be expected for reſtraining the prevalence of this alarming evil, and for expoſing, as a calumny and inſult, the triumph of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and their aſſociates, who make their boaſt, that England (as well as Switzerland) is over-run with men who hate and deſpiſe Chriſtianity, as Julian hated and deſpiſed it, and who repreſent believers in Chriſt to be contemptible, as to their number, rank and character.

* The Principles of Moral Political Philoſophy, vol. 2. p. 106. 8vo. This Author's " View of the Evidences of Chriſtianity," in two volumes, 8vo. and his " Horæ Paulinæ," deſerve attentive peruſal.

At ſuch a period as this, we derive encouragement from the reflection that there are many, both in our own country, and on the continent, who have renounced neither the faith nor the fear of God; and who, both in their principles, and in their practice, manifeſt a belief of his Providence, a veneration for his name, a dread of his diſpleaſure, a deſire of his favour, and a reſpect for his inſtitutions and laws. They are deſcribed by the Prophet, as perſons *who feared the Lord*, and *thought upon his name.*

The character of ſuch perſons is the *ſecond* ſubject of conſideration, that is ſuggeſted to us by the text. The importance and utility of pious principles, as ſprings and incentives of univerſal Virtue, are inculcated by the language of the Prophet in a manner, the moſt intelligible and impreſſive. The fear of God, and a regard to his name, *i. e.* to his being, attributes and dominion, are here, and in many other paſſages of Scripture, deſcriptive of the religious and virtuous character in general. Theſe principles furniſh the moſt obvious rule of conduct, and the moſt powerful motives to the obſervance of it. It is, therefore, no wonder, that they ſhould be made to comprehend the whole of religion, in its influence both on the judgment and temper of the mind, and on the outward practice.

Whilſt we retain God in our thoughts; whilſt we cheriſh juſt ſentiments of his perfections, character, and government; whilſt we maintain an habitual regard to him, on all occaſions, as the witneſs, and the judge of our conduct; we ſhall be provided with a defence againſt temptation, and with inducements to activity and perſeverance, in well-doing, which no other conſideration can ſo readily afford us. And there is not a more alarm-

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ing indication, with reſpect to the character either of private perſons, or of public communities, than a cuſtomary neglect of thoſe religious duties, which are the means of acquiring, increaſing and exhibiting a becoming regard to God. In other words, the exerciſes of piety are eſſentially connected with the practice of univerſal righteouſneſs and benevolence. Nor do they contribute merely to the preſervation and advancement of our perſonal and ſocial virtues, but to our relief and comfort on a variety of trying occaſions in the pilgrimage of life.

Thoſe who fear the Lord, and think on his name, will poſſeſs ſources of tranquillity and hope, as well as motives to an irreproachable and exemplary conduct, to which the irreligious and ungodly are utter ſtrangers. In ſeaſons of domeſtic diſtreſs, and of national calamity, as well as in a period of perſonal affliction, piety ſuggeſts views and adminiſters conſolations, admirably adapted to counteract fear and anxiety, to chear the heart under the preſſure of evil, and to brighten our proſpects with regard to this world, and that which is to come. The man who can direct his views above and beyond the operation of natural cauſes, and the train of viſible events, to the wiſdom, and power, and benevolence of the Sovereign and Arbiter of the univerſe; and who can perceive God, planning and executing his own gracious counſels, in times of danger and diſtreſs, and whatever may be the deſigns or the meaſures of the inſtruments that are employed: Such a man is more ſecure and more happy, however humble his condition, and however few and limited his exertions, than thoſe who can entertain no hope beſides that which their own efforts, and the concurrence of others, fallible and feeble like themſelves, can afford them. They

will, therefore, in a time of prevailing indifference or infidelity with reſpect to religion, or in a ſeaſon of national alarm and diſtreſs, endeavour to preſerve and promote the influence of thoſe principles, from which they derive perſonal ſatisfaction and comfort, and which they conceive to be neceſſary to the virtue and happineſs of others. We are hence led to inquire,

Thirdly, what will be the conduct of the perſons whoſe character we have briefly deſcribed in that period of religious declenſion, or apprehended danger, which we have alſo delineated.

"THEN," ſays the prophet, "*they that feared the* LORD, *ſpake often one to another.*" They *aſſociated* and *united*, as an evidence of their attachment to a common cauſe, and of their ſolicitude to guard and perpetuate a common intereſt. Perſons of ſimilar character, in like circumſtances, ſhould purſue the ſame conduct. Differing from one another in a variety of reſpects; in rank and condition; in talents and influence; in religious ſentiments; in forms of worſhip; in ſocial connections; they are all agreed in the fundamental principles of religion. They are all convinced of the neceſſity and importance of retaining and promoting theſe principles; and they are diſpoſed to ſurrender leſſer differences, and, by uniting on the ſame ground, and in the uſe of the means of defence which they can all adopt, to ſtrengthen themſelves againſt the common enemy. Whilſt diviſion and animoſity enfeeble and diſcourage the advocates of the beſt cauſe; whilſt ſeparate efforts are weak and ſpiritleſs; and whilſt contention about points of inferior moment diverts the attention from greater concerns, and exhauſts the vigour of the mind;—united and harmonious concurrence, whatever be the object

to which our views are directed, whether it be the prevention of a dreaded evil, or the attainment of a deſirable good, ſtrengthens and animates thoſe who are engaged in the proſecution of it. Let no difference, then, about doubtful and comparatively unintereſting ſpeculations, alienate the affections of pious and good men from one another. Let no diſcord about ſubordinate articles of faith, or inſtituted ceremonies of worſhip diſſolve the bonds of charity. Let not the eſtabliſhed and endowed church deſpiſe that which is merely tolerated, and which, in its attachment to the civil conſtitution of the country, and its zeal for promoting the religion of it, merits the protection it enjoys. Let no unkind ſuſpicion, or unmerited cenſure on the part of one body of Chriſtians, or another, prevent their cordial concurrence in defending that common Chriſtianity, in the privileges and hopes of which they have all an equal intereſt. There never was a period, in which the union of Chriſtians of every denomination has been more neceſſary, and is likely to prove more uſeful than the preſent. If infidelity prevails, as we have reaſon to believe it does; if that period of its prevalence, announced by Scripture predictions, and expected by approved interpreters of theſe predictions, be ſpeedily approaching, or if it be actually arrived: let believers of every deſcription candidly and charitably unite. Let them join their counſels and their efforts for ſtemming its progreſs, and for reſtraining its ſpread in their families, in their connections, and in their country. Union will inſpire zeal. Cordial cooperation will produce effects the moſt beneficial to individuals, to ſociety at large, and to the world in general.

Let Chriſtians avow themſelves as ſuch, oſtenſibly and without diſguiſe. When their faith is aſſaulted, let them not be aſhamed of openly profeſſing and vigorouſly defending it. With this view let them *aſſociate* in the *public exerciſes* of religion: and by a cuſtomary and regular attendance on its ſacred inſtitutions, revive their credit, and promote their ſalutary influence. When the prophet deſcribes the conduct of pious and good men, at the time to which he refers; when he repreſents them as *ſpeaking often to one another*, we can have no doubt of his comprehending their intercourſe for religious purpoſes in the temple, and in the ſynagogues, which were generally eſtabliſhed in his days, and which contributed to preſerve the Jews from totally abandoning religion, and degenerating into idolatry. He knew the importance, he ſanctions the utility of ſuch intercourſe; and the benefits accruing from it are too obvious; they have been too long and too generally experienced, to need illuſtration or proof. Would thoſe perſons, and their number is very far from being inconſiderable, who have not renounced their Chriſtian principles, teſtify their attachment to them, and their ſolicitude for their ſubſiſtence and diſſemination in the way which we are now recommending; they would do greater ſervice to the Chriſtian cauſe—to the cauſe of human virtue and human happineſs—and by direct conſequence, to the riſing generation, and to the civil community, than they can well conceive. Example has a mighty influence on thoſe, whom argument cannot reach, or whom it is inſufficient to convince. And if our example, from any collateral circumſtance that attends it; from our rank in ſociety; from our real or apprehended talents; from our extenſive connections; from our general character;

character; is likely to attract notice, and to command imitation; we may do much good by giving countenance to the public duties of religion. Thoſe who have been accuſtomed to neglect them, will be induced, by the practice of perſons whom they reſpect and eſteem, to entertain different views; they will be gradually led to think them important; and in the end they will find them pleaſing and uſeful. But the argument which I now wiſh to inculcate on attention, is the ſervice which would thus be rendered to the cauſe of religion in general. Every attendant on public inſtitutions is a viſible witneſs to the truth of religious principles. He is a ſilent advocate on their behalf. His conduct is a lecture on their importance and utility. His example is eloquent and perſuaſive; and a multitude of ſuch examples would rouſe the heedleſs and negligent, determine the heſitating and wavering, and encourage the conſtancy of the diffident and timid. This mode of ſerving the cauſe of religion, in a period of general indifference and of prevalent infidelity, is ſuch as every one may adopt, whatever may be his natural or acquired endowments, or his external condition. It falls to the lot of few to have talents or leiſure for refuting the objections of unbelievers, or for defending by a train of reaſoning, their Chriſtian principles and profeſſion. But abilities for this purpoſe would be more generally acquired and improved, by an attendance on an inſtructive miniſtry; and a correſponding practice would diffuſe that inſtruction, and the beneficial influence of it to an extent, which muſt afford to every well-diſpoſed mind peculiar ſatisfaction and pleaſure.

Under this head I ſhall only add, that the perſons deſcribed in the text will *ſelect for their cuſtomary*

tomary associates thoſe that poſſeſs ſimilar principles with their own. They will thus, by free and friendly conference, eſtabliſh and encourage one another in the belief and avowal of their religious principles, and form a kind of choſen band, whoſe number and character will deter and defeat the hoſtile efforts of thoſe who attempt to ſeduce them into infidelity. It has ſometimes happened, that in mixed ſociety religion has had ſeveral aſſailants. A ſingle advocate has, perhaps, been overpowered; and for want of ſuitable ſupport he has either been wholly ſilent, or he has ſunk under an imaginary and boaſted triumph. Againſt ſuch combinations, if we may be allowed to call them by this name, let the advocates of religion unite. Let them aſſociate for mutual aſſiſtance. Let them inſtruct, encourage and aid one another; and they need not fear any confederacy that may be formed againſt them or their principles. I obſerve,

Fourthly, The text preſents to our notice the beneficial conſequences of union in a time of religious declenſion or of national danger. God regards with approbation the conduct of thoſe, who unite their efforts in favour of religion, when it is peculiarly expoſed to the aſſault of its enemies, or apparently ſinking under neglect and reproach. His favour to ſuch is as certain, as if every thing they ſaid and did for the honour of religion and virtue were recorded in a regiſter or *book of remembrance;* from which no viciſſitudes of time can ever eraſe it. The ſupreme Sovereign will manifeſt his favour to ſuch perſons by ſignal tokens of diſtinction in the revolutions of this world, and by more illuſtrious diſplays of it in that which is to come.

Whatever may be their experience of diſtreſs in common with others of the ſame age or nation with themſelves,

themſelves, their faith in his Providence and their hope of his favour will be a ſtay and ſolace to their minds. They will have no occaſion to be either dejected or deſponding. Objects of his approbation, and intitled to the everlaſting tokens of it, they may reſt aſſured, that *all things ſhall work together for their good.* The principles they have adopted and which it has been their ſolicitude to retain and to promote, will raiſe them ſuperior to the conflicts of their ſtate and warfare, preſerve them tranquil and undiſturbed in ſcenes of perſonal or national diſtreſs, and fortify them for acting or for ſuffering, as their circumſtances may require.

The Providence of God will likewiſe be their guard, and may poſſibly make a way for their eſcape, when calamities overwhelm the wicked and ungodly. *As a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him*, ſo will God ſpare them. The ſcourge which is vindictive and penal to others, may not be permitted to touch them; or if it ſhould, its influence will be ſalutary and beneficial. As the Chriſtians were reſcued from the deſtruction that overwhelmed the Jews, when Jeruſalem was beſieged and deſolated by the Roman armies under Titus Veſpaſian; as Noah and his family were preſerved in the deluge; as Lot and his kindred eſcaped unhurt from the conflagration of Sodom; ſo may the wiſdom and power of the Almighty deliver the upright and pious in times of national diſtreſs, and probably honour them as the inſtruments of averting evil from others and perpetuating their bleſſings. But whatever may be the event of private or public calamities, their beſt intereſts are ſecure. *They ſhall be mine, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, in that day when I make up my jewels*, or, as the words might be rendered, *they ſhall be a peculiar treaſure to me*

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in the day which I make or appoint; that is, in that period of final retribution, when thoſe, whom God approves, and that are precious in his eſtimation, ſhall be introduced into manſions, which no enemy can moleſt, and made partakers of a happineſs, which ſhall never admit of interruption or termination.

How much then is it our wiſdom and intereſt to cultivate and maintain the character to which ſuch privileges belong; with which the Sovereign of the world has connected preſent ſecurity and everlaſting bleſſedneſs!

What blindneſs and infatuation muſt have ſeized thoſe, who not only diſpute the truth of Chriſtianity, but deny the exiſtence of God, the agency of his Providence, and the reality of a future world! In this extreme has the infidelity of a neighbouring nation too generally terminated. Accuſtomed to an erroneous creed and a ſuperſtitious worſhip, they have not been able to diſtinguiſh between truth and falſhood. They have rejected the good and the bad—reality and impoſture—without diſcrimination. Nor have they yet diſcerned the pernicious tendency and the deſtructive influence of that anarchy in religion, to ſay nothing of their preſent government, which they have too commonly adopted and too long maintained. Their example ſhould be a warning to other nations; to the inhabitants of Britain more eſpecially, where more rational principles of religious faith and forms of worſhip have been known and profeſſed. Whilſt we obſerve and lament the juſtly deplorable effects of that licentious ſyſtem, which will be an indelible blot on the page of the hiſtory of France, let us unite in guarding and perpetuating our ſuperior and more diſtinguiſhed privileges. Let us teſtify our gratitude

and

and enſure the continuance of our religious advantages by a diligent uſe and faithful improvement of them. Let us dread their interruption and diſcontinuance as the greateſt evil that can befal us: and to prevent this evil, let us not neglect the obſervance of thoſe inſtitutions, which are the appointed means of our increaſing knowledge, of our confirmed attachment to the principles of religion, and of our progreſſive experience of the benefits they are deſigned and adapted to afford us. And above all, let us be ſolicitous to connect with the principles of our faith a correſponding practice. This will be to us and to others a permanent teſtimony in favour of their importance and utility. It will be a ground of truſt and hope amidſt all the changing ſcenes of our preſent being, and juſtify our expectation of union and intercourſe in a future world. We cannot exhibit a more convincing evidence of true patriotiſm, of our love to our country, and of our concern for its permanence and proſperity, than by doing what lies in our power to preſerve and promote a due regard to religion, both in the principles and the practice of it. Our upright, active, zealous and continued efforts, united to thoſe of others, for this purpoſe, by our counſel, example and influence, cannot, under the bleſſing of God, fail of ſucceſs. We ſhall thus, at all events, enſure to ourſelves an inheritance in that kingdom of God, which is prepared for the juſt; a kingdom of unmoleſted ſecurity, of uninterrupted concord and peace, of perfect holineſs and everlaſting felicity. Amen!

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MA[illegible]VERSITY
UNI[illegible]COLLECTION